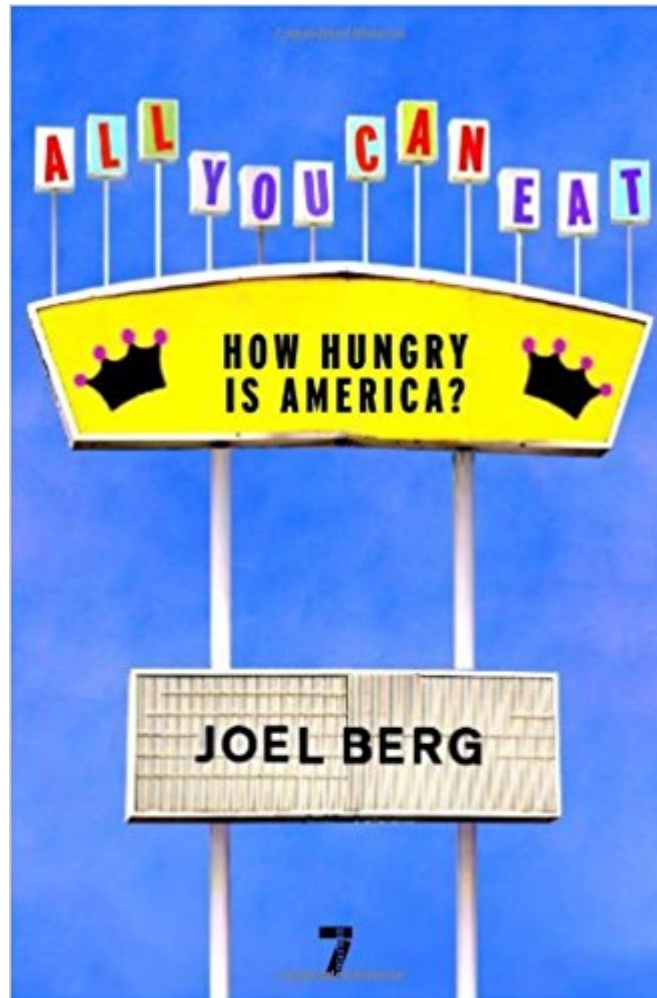




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# All You Can Eat: How Hungry Is America?



## Synopsis

With the biting wit of *Supersize Me* and the passion of a lifelong activist, Joel Berg has his eye on the growing number of people who are forced to wait on lines at food pantries across the nation—the modern headline. *All You Can Eat* reveals that hunger is a problem as American as apple pie, and shows what it is like when your income is not enough to cover rising housing and living costs and put food on the table. Berg takes to task politicians who remain inactive; the media, which ignores hunger except during holidays and hurricanes; and the food industry, which makes fattening, artery-clogging fast food more accessible to the nation's poor than healthy fare. He challenges the new president to confront the most unthinkable result of US poverty—hunger—and offers a simple and affordable plan to end it for good. A spirited call to action, *All You Can Eat* shows how practical solutions for hungry Americans will ultimately benefit America's economy and all of its citizens.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Berg, executive director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, spotlights domestic poverty and hunger in this book that has sharp words for politicians, charities and religious denominations. The author reveals how consistently the federal government has ignored the fact that 35.5 million Americans, including 12.6 million children, don't have enough to eat. Although local governments cared for hungry and poverty-stricken citizens in the pre-Depression years, contemporary politicians in Washington have alternately denied that hunger is a problem, then admitted its existence, then

tried to eradicate it with programs that rarely last. Whether he is reasoning why the word hunger is better and more to-the-point than the government's term food insecure, pillorying hunger surveys that don't count the homeless or demonstrating how even well-meaning social services contribute to the problem, Berg is a passionate and articulate advocate. This book provides a range of practical solutions, but gets bogged down by an overwhelming amount of hard data and statistics, which may deter some readers from wanting to take a good-sized bite of it. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

JOEL BERG is Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH). He served for eight years under the Clinton Administration in Senior Executive Service positions in the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), creating a number of high-profile initiatives that fought hunger and implemented national service projects across the country.

This book is an eye opener

Joel Berg wrote an excellent book on the subject of hunger relief. Very informative writing. I recommend it for all those who either are already involved in hunger relief or "beginners" seeking more helpful information on this dire subject.

Joe Berg uses statistics, step by step arguments, and humor to walk the reader the challenges and solutions to fighting hunger in America.

Discover what is really going on with SNAP funding and why raising the minimum wage may be the best fix.

This is one of the best public policy books I've ever read. Why? Four simple reasons: 1. Joel Berg knows everything there is to know about hunger and the politics of food, and he's passionate about his subject. 2. He writes with vigor, intelligence, and great humor (a rarity among policy wonks!) You won't have to prop your eyes open with toothpicks. You'll zip through it, slowed down only because you'll stop a lot to quote from the pages and to ask other people in the room things like, "Guess how many weeks it would take a minimum-wage worker to earn enough money for a Hermes purse?" 3. He doesn't blame it all on the Republicans. He bashes liberals too, sometimes hilariously. 4. He offers solutions that make sense. Compared to some of the other problems this country has, ending

hunger sounds like a breeze. Read this book and you'll agree. You might even help make it happen.

Joel Berg's *All You Can Eat* is, in essence, a primer on hunger in America. If you had to read one book about what is, depending on who is talking, euphemistically called 'food insecurity', this is it. Various blurbs and reviewers call him either controversial or witty. While he does make some pointedly droll remarks (especially toward the end), he is a straight shooter and simply lays out the problem and a solution (basically that federal programs already do a really good job, except that they're underfunded and made needlessly complex). What might some people find uncomfortable is that he is blunt about the causes of hunger, the intellectual weaknesses of some anti-hunger advocates and the ineffectiveness of many things people do to 'end hunger'. A lot of people engaged in ending hunger are vague about its causes and act as if only a little more charity will do the trick. An extended analysis of poverty and the limits of charity won't particularly appeal to such people. But if you want to know why hunger continues to exist and can be done about it, this is a must read. The book was finished in 2008 (with references to the then ongoing presidential election campaign and not knowing who will win). As such, the Great Recession was underway but still not obviously 'great'. This raises the question of the extent to which the book might be dated, as a lot has happened since then. Some of the numbers are dated (and now worse), and there's increasing evidence on the effectiveness of what used to be called food stamps. The main difference between 2008 and now -- and this is huge, considering it is only four years -- is that the book is able to end on an optimistic pointing, noting that historically, people across the political spectrum have agreed that hunger is unacceptable and must be combated. Berg argues that this has the potential to become a way in which Americans could relearn to be bipartisan. Now, with the House GOP is attempting to eviscerate federal nutrition programs, it's clear that that bipartisan consensus is over. (Berg himself agrees that this political shift is the one way that his book is dated. I know this because I had an opportunity to ask him right after I got done reading it.) The book also has several appendices useful for anti-hunger advocates and people who would like to become such.

This book is good, but it could be so much better. There's some serious lapses -- everything from typos to manipulating statistics. Most egregiously, Berg severely discounts the effects of welfare reform in the 90s and paints a rosy picture of the Clinton administration (for which he worked). Some of his policy suggestions are strong, but others (for example, totally ending subsidies to agribusinesses) don't seem to be thought through and are presented as being straightforward and unproblematic. Bottom line, it's an entertaining and informative book. If you're looking for a book

aimed at a general audience, go for it. If you're looking for an academic source, you may not wish to quote directly. Either way, take what he says with a grain of salt.

I devoured (pun-intended) this book; I loved it. I read it on the train to and from work (where I happen to be the director of two emergency food programs). It alternately made me want to rage and cry and I was sometimes tempted to throw the book across the car in frustration with the government's--and my own--complicity in perpetuating the cycle of hunger and poverty in America. Luckily, Berg is also very funny and diffused the tension with great one-liners, causing me to crack up at random times (earning me many suspicious stares from my fellow commuters). For the record, my favorite line is "I'd be my own worst enemy if there weren't so much competition for the title." Priceless. All joking aside, it's a truly well-written and clear-cut book, mostly very easy to read. Some of the stats get a bit heavy but if you just take them slowly and give them time to digest (ok, not ALL joking aside) they really do add to the overall picture of the situation. I'm going to be buying copies for the volunteers of my food programs. Some may not consider it to be the most festive topic but when you see that the book ends with a comprehensive, well thought-out and practical solution to the problem of hunger, it's enough to put anyone in the holiday spirit! Thanks for the book Joel. You've done the country a great service with it!

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